United Nations

Report of the Committee on Information

General Assembly

Official Records • Forty-seventh Session
Supplement No. 21 (A/47/21)

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NOTE

Symbols of United Nations documents are composed of capital letters combined with figures. Mention of such a symbol indicates a reference to a United Nations document.

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I. INTRODUCTION

1. At its thirty-fourth session, the General Assembly decided to maintain the Committee to Review United Nations Public Information Policies and Activities, established under Assembly resolution 33/115 C of 18 December 1978, which would be known as the Committee on Information, and to increase its membership from 41 to 66. In its resolution 34/182 of 18 December 1979, the Assembly requested the Committee on Information:

> "(a) To continue to examine United Nations public information policies and activities, in the light of the evolution of international relations, particularly during the past two decades, and of the imperatives of the establishment of the new international economic order and of a new world information and communication order;
>
> "(b) To evaluate and follow up the efforts made and the progress achieved by the United Nations system in the field of information and communications;
>
> "(c) To promote the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order intended to strengthen peace and international understanding and based on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information and to make recommendations thereon to the General Assembly;"

and requested the Committee on Information and the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its thirty-fifth session.

2. At its thirty-fifth session, the General Assembly, in resolution 35/201 of 16 December 1980, expressed its satisfaction with the work of the Committee on Information, approved the report of the Committee and the recommendations of its Ad Hoc Working Group, 1/ reaffirmed the mandate given to the Committee in Assembly resolution 34/182, and decided to increase the membership of the Committee from 66 to 67. The Committee on Information agreed, at its organizational session in 1980, that the principle of geographical rotation would be applied to all the officers of the Committee and that they should be elected for two-year terms of office.

3. At its thirty-sixth to forty-fifth sessions, the General Assembly again expressed its satisfaction with the work of the Committee on Information, approved the reports of the Committee 2/ and its recommendations, and reaffirmed the mandate given to the Committee in resolution 34/182 (General Assembly resolutions 36/149 B, 37/94 B, 38/82 B, 39/98 A, 40/164 A, 41/68 A, 42/162, 43/60, 44/50 and 45/76). At its forty-sixth session, the General Assembly took note of the report of the Committee on Information and adopted its consensus resolutions (General Assembly resolutions 46/73 A and B). The General Assembly further requested the Committee to report to the Assembly at its forty-seventh session.

4. At its thirty-ninth session, the General Assembly appointed two new members of the Committee, namely China and Mexico; at its forty-first session the Assembly appointed Malta as a new member of the Committee; at its forty-third session, Hungary, Ireland and Zimbabwe were appointed; and at its forty-fourth session, the Assembly appointed Nepal as a new member.

5. At its forty-fifth session, the Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Committee on Information, to increase the membership of the Committee from 74 to 78 members, and appointed Czechoslovakia, the Islamic Republic of Iran, Jamaica and Uruguay as members of the Committee. The General Assembly also decided on the appointment of the Byelorussian Soviet Socialist Republic as a member of the Committee on Information, with immediate effect, to fill the vacancy left by the German Democratic Republic.

6. At its forty-sixth session, the Assembly decided, on the recommendation of the Committee on Information, to increase the membership of the Committee from 78 to 79 members and appointed Burkina Faso as a member of the Committee.

7. The Committee is composed of the following Member States:

Algeria
Argentina
Bangladesh
Belarus
Belgium
Benin
Brazil
Bulgaria
Burkina Faso
Burundi
Chile
China
Colombia
Congo
Costa Rica
Côte d'Ivoire
Cuba
Cyprus
Czechoslovakia
Denmark
Ecuador
Egypt
El Salvador
Ethiopia
Finland
France
Germany
Ghana
Greece
Guatemala
Guinea
Guyana
Hungary
India
Indonesia
Iran (Islamic Republic of)
Ireland
Italy
Jamaica
Japan
Jordan
Kenya
Lebanon
Malta
Mexico
Mongolia
Morocco
Nepal
Netherlands
Niger
Nigeria
Pakistan
Peru
Philippines
Poland
Portugal
Romania
Russian Federation
Singapore
Somalia
Spain
Sri Lanka
Sudan
Syrian Arab Republic
Togo
Trinidad and Tobago
Tunisia
Turkey
Ukraine
United Kingdom of Great Britain and Northern Ireland
United Republic of Tanzania
United States of America
Uruguay
Venezuela
Viet Nam
Yemen
Yugoslavia
Zaire
Zimbabwe

II. ORGANIZATIONAL QUESTIONS

A. Opening of the session

8. The fourteenth session of the Committee was convened at United Nations Headquarters from 30 March to 16 April 1992. The Under-Secretary-General for Public Information made an introductory statement (see annex I).

B. Appointment of new members

9. The Committee welcomed the representative of Burkina Faso as a new member.

C. Election of officers

10. Upon the nomination of the representative of Hungary, the Committee elected by acclamation Mr. Aleksander Janowski (Poland) to serve as a Vice-Chairman to complete an unexpired term of office in the Bureau. The officers of the Committee on Information for the period 1991-1992 are thus as follows:

Chairman: Mr. Ricardo Lagorio (Argentina)

Vice-Chairmen: Mr. Bob Hiensch (Netherlands)
Mr. Mansoor Suhail (Pakistan)
Mr. Aleksander Janowski (Poland)

Rapporteur: Mr. Sabri Boukadoum (Algeria)

D. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work

11. The Committee adopted, without objection, the following agenda and programme of work:

1. Opening of the session.
2. Appointment of new members.
3. Election of officers.
4. Adoption of the agenda and programme of work.
5. Statement by the Chairman.
6. General debate and consideration of substantive questions:
   (a) Promotion of the establishment of a new, more just and more effective world information and communication order intended to strengthen peace and international understanding and based on the free circulation and wider and better balanced dissemination of information;

(b) Continuation of the examination of United Nations public information policies and activities in the light of the evolution of international relations, particularly during the past two decades, and of the imperatives of the establishment of the new international economic order and of a new world information and communication order;

(c) Evaluation and follow-up of the efforts made and the progress achieved by the United Nations system in the field of information and communications.

7. Preparation and adoption of the report of the Committee to the General Assembly at its forty-seventh session.

12. For the consideration of item 6 of the agenda, the Committee on Information had before it the following documents:

(a) Report of the Secretary-General on activities of the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC), submitted pursuant to the request of the General Assembly in paragraph 6 of resolution 46/73 B of 11 December 1991; 3/

(b) Report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations information centres in 1991: allocation of resources and host government assistance, submitted pursuant to the request of the General Assembly in paragraphs 1 (j) and (k) of resolution 46/73 B of 11 December 1991; 4/

(c) Report of the Secretary-General on implementation of a system-wide information programme for the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), submitted pursuant to the request of the General Assembly in paragraph 3 of resolution 46/73 B of 11 December 1991. 5/

13. It was decided that a report of the Secretary-General on ways and means of furthering the development of communication infrastructures in developing countries, which was requested by the General Assembly in resolution 46/73 B, would be prepared after 1 January 1993, following the submission of additional observations and suggestions by Member States.

E. Statement by the Chairman

14. The Chairman addressed the Committee at its opening meeting (see annex II).

F. Observers

15. The following Member States took part in the session as observers: Angola, Antigua and Barbuda, Australia, Austria, Bahrain, Barbados, Bolivia, Botswana, Cameroon, Canada, Democratic Republic of Korea, Djibouti, Gabon, Haiti, Israel, Libyan Arab Jamahiriya, Luxembourg, Madagascar, Malaysia, Namibia, Norway, Oman, Panama, Paraguay, Republic of Korea, Senegal, Sweden, Uganda and Zambia. The representatives of the Holy See and Switzerland also participated as observers.

16. Representatives of the International Labour Organisation (ILO) and the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) attended.

17. In addition, representatives of the International Organization of Journalists (IOJ), the United Nations Correspondents Association (UNCA), and the World Federation of United Nations Associations (WFUNA) participated as observers.

G. Other business

18. The Committee on Information decided to conduct further informal consultations through the Bureau, the spokespersons of the regional groups, the Group of 77 and China.

19. The Chairman informed the Committee that the Republic of Korea and Senegal had requested to become members of the Committee. The Committee decided to recommend to the General Assembly the enlargement of its membership from 79 to 81 members and to submit the candidacies of the Republic of Korea and Senegal to the General Assembly for approval (see draft decision in para. 80 below).

III. GENERAL DEBATE AND CONSIDERATION OF SUBSTANTIVE QUESTIONS

20. Statements during the general debate were made by or on behalf of the following States members of the Committee: Belarus, Benin, Brazil, Burkina Faso, Burundi, China, Colombia, Congo, Costa Rica, Côte d'Ivoire, Cuba, Cyprus, Czechoslovakia, Egypt, Finland (on behalf of the five Nordic countries), Ghana, India, Indonesia, Iran (Islamic Republic of), Ireland (on behalf of the Group of Experts of the Group of Western European and other States), Kenya, Lebanon, Mexico, Nepal, Niger, Pakistan, Peru, Philippines, Poland, Portugal (on behalf of the European Community and its member States), Russian Federation, Syrian Arab Republic, Tunisia, Ukraine, Venezuela, Yemen and Zimbabwe. Statements were also made by the observers of Gabon, Haiti and Senegal. At the Committee's invitation, the representative of the United Nations Correspondents Association made a statement.

21. In addressing the substantive questions before the Committee, all delegations reaffirmed the need to strengthen the consensus, and a large number of them expressed the view that the consensus should be a starting-point for future progress, rather than an end in itself. All speakers underscored the newly enhanced role of the United Nations in international affairs, resulting from dramatic changes in the global political environment. It was agreed that, in face of the challenges before the Organization, information had a critical role to play.

22. A large number of delegations reconfirmed their commitment to the basic freedoms of information, opinion and expression. They also emphasized the essential relationship between communication and development and the importance of the free flow of information. In that connection, they stressed that violation of press freedom anywhere was a violation of the human rights of all. Many welcomed such initiatives as the Windhoek Seminar on Promoting an Independent and Pluralistic African Press, organized jointly by UNESCO and the Department of Public Information in May 1991, and expressed their commitment to the Windhoek Declaration. One speaker said that his delegation would welcome such a seminar in the Arabian peninsula, and others called for similar seminars in different parts of the world. In view of the somewhat limited participation in the Windhoek Seminar, one delegation noted that the Committee should study the Declaration and submit its comments to the General Assembly. A number of speakers agreed that the Declaration was a milestone in promoting a free press in developing countries, which was one of the most important catalysts of human freedom and development.

23. There was support by several delegations for declaring 3 May Press Freedom Day, as approved by UNESCO. 6/ One Committee member was of the opinion that the proposal merited close attention in the Economic and Social Council. Many speakers supported the right of journalists to seek information freely and condemned any harassment of them.

24. One speaker, on behalf of a number of others, said that disparities existed between developed and developing countries affecting the ability of the public, private and other media to disseminate information, and he said that continuing efforts would be made to assist developing countries in the establishment of communications infrastructures based on the free dissemination of information. Another delegation called for assistance to young democracies.

25. Many speakers expressed their continued support for UNESCO and its activities to improve the communications capacities of developing countries, particularly under the International Programme for Development of Communication. 7/ One speaker expressed disappointment that UNESCO did not make a statement before the Committee. A number of delegations stated that UNESCO's new strategy of communication in service of humanity must be implemented in full. They also expressed the hope that the Department of Public Information could break new ground in helping the United Nations contribute to the establishment of a new information and communications order and could increase cooperation with UNESCO.

26. A number of delegations said that in today's "global village", the developing countries were continuing to be saturated with information originating from the media of the developed countries. In their view, the developing world was struggling to keep up, but the economic disparities and imbalances made that impossible. Those delegations believed that the information gap was widening, and, therefore, the world was far from reaching the goals of a new information and communications order. Many felt that the developing countries were indeed on the defensive to preserve their cultural identities in the face of the developed world's information, while at the same time were unable to get their news out to the world.

27. One speaker referred to television broadcasts from another country, which, he said, were in violation of the sovereignty of his country. He said that the International Frequency Registration Board (IFRB) had declared that those broadcasts violated international law and the International Convention on Telecommunications of 1982. He reiterated the legitimate right of his country to respond and pointed out that the Government of that country was the only one responsible for the situation and the resulting consequences. Another representative replied that he believed that the IFRB's view was incorrect and could not be substantiated historically and that every participant should share his concern since the volunteered opinion of IFRB potentially affected a large majority of the members of the International Telecommunication Union.

28. Several delegations stressed the importance of cooperative efforts to create skilled manpower in the developing countries and, in that connection, there was much support for the Department of Public Information's programme for broadcasters and journalists. One speaker emphasized the need for the Department to explore the possibility of expanding those training courses by involving institutions of higher learning. A number of speakers also expressed support for the Department's cooperation with the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries, and for its continuation.

29. In addressing the subject of the public information policies and activities of the United Nations, all speakers expressed their appreciation to the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information for his detailed and enlightening report on the activities of the Department. Most speakers referred to the new climate in international relations, as the world approached the turn of a new century. The United Nations was now at centre stage and thus the Department's role could not be overemphasized or oversimplified. The prestige and credibility of the Organization rested on world public opinion, which the Department of Public Information could help to shape. However, as more was expected of the United Nations, more would be

expected of the Department of Public Information. All speakers acknowledged the unprecedented challenges to the Department at the present time and expressed their appreciation for the work it had accomplished during the past year.

30. One speaker, also on behalf of a number of other countries, said that it was important for the Department of Public Information to make maximum use of existing resources in a time of serious financial difficulty for the United Nations. His group felt that the Department had sufficient resources and looked forward to collaborative efforts regarding the best and most efficient utilization of those resources. A number of speakers said that, in view of its financial problems, the Department should re-examine its activities so that it would become more efficient and responsive to new developments.

31. While appreciating changes already implemented, many expressed the belief that the Department could be further streamlined and restructured, as there was still room for improvement. It was suggested that that could be achieved, inter alia, through modernization of its operations, redeployment of resources and elimination of duplication, leading to further enhancement of its effectiveness. It was understood by many that in the face of heavy demands, the Department needed the utmost flexibility in the use of the limited resources at its disposal in order to allow it to respond rapidly to news-breaking developments.

32. A number of representatives commented on the imbalance within the Department of Public Information with regard to geographical distribution of posts, particularly at medium and higher levels. Several delegations said that they remained underrepresented in the Department. One representative said that the level of representation of women from Eastern Europe in the Department was inadequate and should be corrected. Another speaker expressed his concern over the lack of adequate representation from Asian countries. One delegation expressed its concern regarding adequate representation from French-speaking African countries, and in particular, the representation of women from that region.

33. It was suggested that a stable public affairs strategy for the United Nations should be elaborated on the basis of the broad political consensus in the Committee. One representative suggested that such an information strategy for the Organization could involve three steps: a newly designed approach to the mass media; an evaluation of the Department's publications; and enhancement of the efficiency of the United Nations information centres. Furthermore, the Department should rely to a greater extent on extrabudgetary resources and contingency funds for emergency tasks.

34. Many delegates commented positively on the Department's work in implementing General Assembly resolutions on priority issues, such as: the question of Palestine and the Palestinian intifadah; the struggle against apartheid; human rights; peace-keeping and peacemaking; and the environment. A few speakers suggested that it was necessary to look at specific mandated activities in the light of new developments, such as in the case of the situation in southern Africa. One speaker said that the Department must strengthen its capacities as an information dissemination agent, but it could also collect information as part of an early warning system for preventive diplomacy.

35. In regard to the Secretary-General's report on implementation of a system-wide information plan for the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED), 5/ all delegations expressed sincere appreciation for the Department's multi-media approach in providing information for this important Conference, which had aroused great international interest and expectations. One delegation expressed appreciation for the fact that brochures, leaflets and general backgrounders for journalists had been issued in Portuguese, in addition to the official languages.

36. In the context of information activities on the environment, a number of speakers expressed appreciation for the Department's cooperation in the work of JUNIC, and they welcomed JUNIC's discussions on arrangements for UNCED. One delegation, referring to biotechnological progress in his country, also expressed the hope that at its next session, JUNIC might consider a new strategy for highlighting economic "success" stories in developing countries.

37. Reference was also made to the Department's valuable coverage of the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights and the Fourth World Conference on Women in 1995.

38. In addition to its regular information activities, some speakers raised the subject of the Department's information programmes for special missions. One delegation, on behalf of several others, welcomed the Department's efforts on the dissemination of information in the countries where peace-keeping and peacemaking operations were being carried out. He believed that such programmes could be an important tool in the success of these missions. In that connection, several delegations said that more coverage of such missions was needed and suggested that the Committee could recommend to the General Assembly that all such operations have information components. One delegation said that in regard to peace-keeping activities, the mission in Cambodia would be a challenge. Several delegations noted that they would like to see the Department's publication Blue Helmets published in French and Spanish.

39. With regard to the Secretary-General's report entitled "United Nations information centres in 1991: allocation of resources and host government assistance", 4/ all speakers strongly supported the fundamental importance of the United Nations information centres as a principal means of United Nations "outreach" to the people in both developed and developing countries. It was emphasized that their improved effectiveness was essential to the strengthening of the Department and of the image of the Organization.

40. However, many speakers had deeply felt fundamental problems with the report and, in particular, requested a further clarification of paragraph 14 on the proposed integration of centres with field offices of the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP). They called for a further delineation of criteria before any steps in that regard were taken. It was suggested by some delegations that open debate on the subject would be appropriate and that a detailed proposal of the contemplated plan was necessary before any decisions could be made.

41. A group of delegations believed that the current situation of the information centres was not satisfactory, owing primarily to their having been established on an ad hoc basis without, at times, any real consistency as to

geographical location or identified needs. They believed that the functions and operations of the centres could benefit from clearer objectives and a fundamental reappraisal of needs and of possible overlap or duplication. They also believed that such an evaluation should be undertaken by the Committee and should contain such elements as: identification of some information centres as regional centres; the merging, wherever possible, of separate United Nations offices in the same geographical location; and consideration of decisions on the opening of new centres only upon the recommendation of the Secretary-General.

42. Many delegations believed that the Department of Public Information should prepare a comprehensive conceptual framework assessing the future role of the information centres, outlining criteria for their establishment or maintenance, as well as the role that each would play in its locale. One member expressed his belief that the situation in most centres had deteriorated. Several delegations did not believe that they should prematurely give their views on the Secretary-General's proposal on integration, as that question should be part of the overall review of the whole subject of information centres.

43. A large number of speakers, while expressing their support in principle for a comprehensive study of information centres, noted with concern the question of centres in the developing countries. They expressed the opinion that integration with UNDP was the "wrong therapy" for budgetary problems. Many of those countries commented on the paradox of seeming to cut back on information availability at a time when interest in the United Nations was at an all-time peak. One speaker asked to see the work of the announced task force on the centres' plan and asked that Governments be kept informed. Several other speakers concurred in the belief that an analysis, taking into account the views of the host Governments, would allow for the most efficient use of resources available to the centres. A few delegations expressed the view that other elements of the Department's budget should be revised in order to expand further the network of information centres.

44. While all countries appreciated the economic realities facing the Department of Public Information, a number of speakers pointed to the disparity of budgetary allocations to United Nations information centres in different regions of the world. It seemed to some that the developed countries hosting information centres contributed almost nothing to their operations, while most of the resources allocated to all centres were spent there. In the words of one speaker, the financial "bottleneck" of the Department lay in the fact that the largest proportion of costs were incurred in the centres located in developed countries.

45. Many delegations underlined the fact that the critical reassessment of the United Nations information centres should not be done hastily nor should it jeopardize those countries most in need. They were strongly of the view that United Nations information centres were specific in nature and that their mandate was inherently different from the mandates given to other United Nations field offices, including UNDP. Several delegations questioned the meaning and the rationale of the announced integration of some information centres and felt that they could not be integrated with other United Nations offices without a resulting weakening of the information component.

46. A number of delegations referred to the important role that the centres could assume as part of a mechanism of an early warning system for preventive diplomacy. In that connection, one delegation said that they must not only serve in the role of a "chronicler", but also anticipate events in their respective areas.

47. One speaker reminded the Committee that rent-free premises in Warsaw were waiting to be filled by a United Nations information presence. His country had fulfilled all of the Department's stated requirements, and he hoped that the Secretary-General would make the right decision in that regard. Further, he welcomed the Secretary-General's decision to open the United Nations interim offices for economic and information issues in some States of the Commonwealth of Independent States, while several other speakers requested further details on that issue. Some delegations questioned the status of United Nations information centres in Beirut and Ouagadougou and noted that decisions already taken for the appointment of centre Directors had not been implemented.

48. One speaker questioned the reasons for the delay in the re-activation of the information centre in Tehran. In the same context, several delegations insisted that all provisions of General Assembly resolution 46/73 be implemented, including, among other things, the mandated establishment of the centre in Sana'a, Yemen, and enhancement of centres in Dar es Salaam and Bujumbura. One delegation made a request for a new centre in Gabon. Another speaker presented a proposal to offer the facilities of the University for Peace to make possible the opening of a United Nations information centre in Costa Rica, in view of the fact that in practice that institution was already performing information functions and would fill a gap as an information focal point in Central America.

49. Several speakers supported programmes for regional centre Directors and another called for weekly periodic briefings by centre Directors for journalists, academics and non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in their areas.

50. In discussing the various information products of the Department, a number of delegations expressed support for its efforts to use the latest technology for the dissemination of information, as evidenced, for example, by a new contract with Reuters providing for the direct distribution of United Nations fact sheets and press releases.

51. Another Committee member, on behalf of a number of others, said that it would be appreciated if in the production of its written and audiovisual materials the Department took into account the various standards and practices used around the world.

52. A number of delegations spoke of the importance of radio programmes to their regions of the world, and in that context, several members highlighted the admirable work done by the Department's Asian Radio Unit, which, they felt, did not have adequate resources. One country was concerned that Urdu radio programmes were still not produced under a regular arrangement and called on the Department to rectify that situation. Another expressed interest in the production of radio programmes in Nepali.

53. Several representatives said that, in view of the wide availability of radio in developing countries, the Department should focus on strengthening radio production, particularly for Africa. They appreciated the efforts of the Department's African Radio Unit, but felt that the French language programming was too limited. They expressed the desire that more African radio networks disseminate United Nations radio programmes. It was suggested that the French programme "Bonjour l'Afrique" be expanded. One delegation said that it had recently agreed to provide the Department with radio transmitter facilities for broadcasts to South Africa.

54. One delegation stated that the Middle Eastern Unit in radio and television responsible for programming in Arabic should be strengthened with the necessary expertise and resources. Another cited the importance of the taped radio programme in the Bahasa Indonesia language, which reached some 200 million people.

55. Another delegation urged the Department to reinstate its transmission service of United Nations proceedings and radio broadcasts to permanent missions via speaker telephone.

56. One delegation said that it hoped to see the backlog in the production of the United Nations Yearbook soon rectified, and another asked that the Department review certain "loss-making publications", with a view to placing them on a commercial footing.

57. One speaker said that Development Forum could be improved in terms of format and content, but should not be allowed to perish on financial grounds, as it was the only system-wide publication on development issues.

58. One delegation reiterated the call to have the yearly compilation of General Assembly resolutions published in Spanish and Arabic, in compliance with the General Assembly's request in resolution 46/73.

59. Several delegations expressed their approval of the Department's dissemination of information to the public through NGOs, and spoke of their valuable role, especially in the context of the fiftieth anniversary of the United Nations. Another delegation congratulated the Department on recent awards won by several of its videos and films.

60. A number of speakers emphasized that efficient and improved assistance to the international media at Headquarters was unquestionably one of the most important means of disseminating United Nations information and enhancing the public's knowledge of the Organization. Several delegations paid a tribute to the Executive Media Service of the Department and underscored the importance of providing the highest possible level of information to the media.

61. One delegation, speaking on behalf of a number of others, stated that it might be appropriate at present to consider whether physical and logistical facilities for the media should be identified as an area of particular priority and attention.

62. It was emphasized that the time had come to record activities of the Secretary-General more closely. The press needed full-time access to him when appropriate. One delegation suggested that the Department should strengthen

its requirements for accreditation, and possibly consider an exercise of re-accreditation.

63. Regarding other activities of the Department, one speaker noted the recent public opinion poll conducted in her country and reported that its results had indicated a wide awareness of the United Nations and its activities among the population.

64. Regarding the relationship between the Department and the Committee on Information, one delegation, which also spoke on behalf of a group, requested that each year the Committee undertake a fresh assessment and identify any changes that might be necessary in its approach to the information activities of the United Nations. He believed that the Committee had the responsibility to assess continuously how Member States could best assist the Department. He also said that, at times, the discharge of the mandates given to the Department by the Committee resulted in a confusing range of co-equal tasks and responsibilities, leading occasionally to a lack of focus. There was thus a need to consolidate the role of the Committee as the body which, except in exceptional circumstances, recommended to the General Assembly the mandated activities of the Department.

65. One speaker said that it was the Committee's responsibility to refrain from overburdening the Department with too many tasks. Several members commented on the constructive nature of the inter-sessional cooperation between the Bureau of the Committee, spokespersons of the regional groups, the Group of 77 and China on the one hand, and the Department on the other, as agreed upon at the thirteenth session, and viewed it as a necessary precondition for proper realization of the Department's mandate.

66. One delegation suggested that in addition to financial concerns, the Department should inform the Committee of other problems that it faced in carrying out its activities. Such feedback to the Committee would assist in the formulation of the mandate.

67. In terms of the organization of the Committee's work for the current session, one delegation said that it would like to see the Committee's recommendations to the General Assembly streamlined and clarified on the basis of the consensus resolution 46/73. The new document needed to be a short, working one, dealing with pressing issues, such as those related to the United Nations information centres. Another speaker supported a consensus on the basis of the working paper submitted by the Bureau. It was noted also that resolution 46/73 needed to be implemented in full before there could be further progress.

68. The representative of the United Nations Correspondents Association said that as more information was being expected of journalists covering the United Nations, more was needed in terms of facilities. In practical terms, office space for journalists was a problem and must be expanded. Better access to computers and to background information was needed. Moreover, the area outside of the Security Council Chamber needed to be better equipped to handle the needs of the press.

69. At the closing of the debate, the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information provided additional information on the work of the Department and responded to specific questions posed by the delegations.

70. He provided further details on the plan to integrate some United Nations information centres with field offices of UNDP. Stressing the high value placed on local information programmes, he assured delegations that the integration project, which was fully in line with previous resolutions of the General Assembly, was aimed at a strong United Nations presence in the field and at better fulfilment of the mandated information programmes.

71. With regard to the improvement of public information activities, as set out in resolution 46/73, and the integration plan outlined in paragraph 14 of the Secretary-General's report to the Committee, the Under-Secretary-General stressed that both documents were complementary, aiming at more efficient use of resources through enhanced cooperation within the United Nations common system. Exact criteria and forms of the plan were currently being discussed by an interdepartmental working group.

72. The Under-Secretary-General emphasized the Department's excellent working relationship with the press. He informed the Committee that the Department was drawing up a master plan to address the professional and technological needs of a United Nations press corps in the 1990s. This plan, which would translate into a major financial commitment, could alleviate current problems of office space and equipment for correspondents accredited at Headquarters.

73. Recalling the concern of some delegations regarding parity in press coverage of meetings in English and French, he expressed his commitment to outfitting conference rooms with the necessary work space and word-processing equipment for use by the Department's French press officers, wherever applicable.

74. He informed delegations that the Department of Public Information had formulated a set of updated guidelines for the design of information programmes for peace-keeping and other political missions. Those information strategies would be developed for each specific mission, in cooperation with the Department for Peace-keeping Operations and the appropriate senior officials. He noted the interest expressed by delegations in the publication of French and Spanish editions of the Blue Helmets, but stressed the need to incorporate the necessary funding in the next budget submission.

75. Regarding the Department's information products, the Under-Secretary-General highlighted efforts to produce materials that would meet world standards and to place certain publications on a commercial footing. In that connection, he referred to the UN Chronicle, the Yearbook and Development Forum. With regard to the compendium of General Assembly resolutions, the Department of Public Information was ready to undertake the yearly production of Arabic and Spanish versions and advise the Committee of the financial implications.

76. He noted the interest and appreciation of delegations for the Department's radio programmes that at present were produced in 19 languages. Those productions included a weekly quarter-hour programme in Urdu. In response to one delegation, he stressed that the Department would like to produce radio programmes in Nepali if funding could be ensured. Responding to a number of delegations' interest in French radio programming for Africa, he outlined the existing radio programmes produced in several African languages, in addition to radio programmes in French.

77. With regard to the geographical distribution of staff in the Professional category in the Department, it was pointed out that the guidelines of the General Assembly in that regard applied to the Secretariat as a whole. However, the Department had been making every effort to ensure the most equitable geographical distribution of staff possible. Moreover, it had been making special efforts to increase the representation of women. At present, women occupied 37 per cent of all Professional posts in the Department, exceeding their representation in the Secretariat as a whole. The Under-Secretary-General pointed out the commitment by the Department to further improvement in that regard.

78. In response to interest in the Department's research activities, including the public opinion polling programme, the Under-Secretary-General stressed that the results of those surveys and other research projects were geared towards improving the Department's programme performance in terms of cost and quality standards.

IV. PREPARATION AND ADOPTION OF THE REPORT OF THE COMMITTEE TO THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY AT ITS FORTY-SEVENTH SESSION

79. At its 9th meeting, on 16 April 1992, the Committee decided by consensus to recommend to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft resolutions:

Draft resolution I

Information in service of humanity

The General Assembly,

Taking note of the comprehensive and important report of the Committee on Information,

Also taking note of the report of the Secretary-General on questions relating to information,

Urges that all countries, organizations of the United Nations system as a whole and all others concerned, reaffirming their commitment to the principles of the Charter of the United Nations and to the principles of freedom of the press and freedom of information, as well as to those of the independence, pluralism and diversity of the media, deeply concerned by the disparities existing between developed and developing countries and the consequences of every kind arising from those disparities that affect the capability of the public, private or other media and individuals in developing countries to disseminate information and communicate their views and their cultural and ethical values through endogenous cultural production, as well as to ensure the diversity of sources of and their free access to information, recognizing the call in this context for what in the United Nations and at various international forums has been termed "a new world information and communication order, seen as an evolving and continuous process", should:

(a) Cooperate and interact with a view to reducing existing disparities in information flows at all levels by increasing assistance for the development of communication infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries, with due regard for their needs and the priorities attached to such areas by those countries, and in order to enable them and the public, private or other media in developing countries to develop their own information and communication policies freely and independently and increase the participation of media and individuals in the communication process, and to ensure a free flow of information at all levels;

(b) Ensure for journalists the free and effective performance of their professional tasks and condemn resolutely all attacks against them;

(c) Provide support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes for broadcasters and journalists from public, private and other media in developing countries;

(d) Enhance regional efforts and cooperation among developing countries, as well as cooperation between developed and developing countries, to strengthen communication capacities and to improve the media infrastructure and communication technology in the developing countries, especially in the areas of training and dissemination of information;

(e) Aim, in addition to bilateral cooperation, at providing all possible support and assistance to the developing countries and the media, public, private or other, in the developing countries, with due regard to their interests and needs in the field of information and to action already adopted within the United Nations system, including:

(i) The development of the human and technical resources that are indispensable for the improvement of information and communication systems in developing countries and support for the continuation and strengthening of practical training programmes, such as those already operating under both public and private auspices throughout the developing world;

(ii) The creation of conditions that will enable developing countries and the media, public, private or other, in developing countries, to have, by using their national and regional resources, the communication technology suited to their national needs, as well as the necessary programme material, especially for radio and television broadcasting;

(iii) Assistance in establishing and promoting telecommunication links at the subregional, regional and interregional levels, especially among developing countries;

(iv) The facilitation, as appropriate, of access by the developing countries to advanced communication technology available on the open market;

(f) Provide full support for the International Programme for the Development of Communication of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, which should support both public and private media.

Draft resolution II

United Nations public information policies and activities

The General Assembly,

Reaffirming the primary role of the General Assembly in elaborating, coordinating and harmonizing United Nations policies and activities in the field of information,

Also reaffirming that the Secretary-General should ensure that the activities of the Department of Public Information of the Secretariat, as the focal point of the public information tasks of the United Nations, are strengthened and improved, keeping in view the purposes and principles of the Charter of the United Nations, the priority areas defined by the Assembly and the recommendations of the Committee on Information,

1. Decides to consolidate the role of the Committee on Information as its main subsidiary body mandated to make recommendations relating to the work of the Department of Public Information;

2. Calls upon the Secretary-General, in respect of United Nations public information policies and activities, to implement the following recommendations, in accordance with relevant United Nations resolutions and in this regard should ensure that the Department of Public Information:

(a) Continues to disseminate information about the activities of the United Nations in coordination with the information services of other relevant agencies in accordance with the United Nations medium-term plan, the programme budget and their relevant revisions, pertaining, inter alia to:

(i) International peace and security;

(ii) Disarmament;

(iii) Peace-keeping operations and peacemaking;

(iv) Decolonization and the situation in the Non-Self-Governing Territories in the light of the International Decade for the Eradication of Colonialism;

(v) The promotion and protection of human rights and in that context the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights;

(vi) The elimination of all forms of racial discrimination;

(vii) The advancement of the status of women and their role in society;

(viii) The promotion of the Convention on the Rights of the Child;

(ix) Problems of economic and social development, as well as international economic cooperation aimed at resolving external debt problems;

(x) The least developed countries;

(xi) The environment and development;

(xii) The elimination of foreign occupation;

(xiii) The campaign against terrorism in all its forms in line with General Assembly resolution 40/61 of 9 December 1985;

(xiv) International efforts against drug abuse and illicit drug trafficking;

(xv) Crime prevention and criminal justice;

(xvi) Support for the New Agenda of the United Nations Programme of Action for African Economic Recovery and Development 1986-1990 and for the tremendous efforts of the African countries aimed at recovery and development, as well as the positive response by the international community to alleviate the serious economic situation prevailing in Africa;

(xvii) International efforts towards the total eradication of apartheid and support for the establishment of a united, non-racial and democratic South Africa and, where necessary, the role of the United Nations in this context;

(xviii) United Nations activities pertaining to the situation in the Middle East and the question of Palestine, in particular, also including current developments in that region and the ongoing peace process;

(b) Provides the necessary level of information support for the activities of the United Nations in situations requiring immediate and special response;

(c) Continues its efforts at promoting an informed understanding of the work and purposes of the United Nations system among the peoples of the world and at strengthening the positive image of the system as a whole;

(d) Continues its efforts to ensure timely production and dissemination of its mandated publications, in particular the UN Chronicle, the Yearbook of the United Nations, Development Forum and Africa Recovery and continues to maintain consistent editorial independence and accuracy in reporting all the material that it produces, taking necessary measures to ensure that its output contains adequate, objective and equitable information about issues before the Organization, reflecting divergent opinions where they occur;

(e) Submits a report on continuous and major publications to the Committee on Information at its fifteenth session, providing the following details:

(i) The list of publications and their circulation figures;

(ii) Their cost;

(iii) The original language versions and the languages into which the publications were translated;

(iv) Target audiences, including, where possible, the intended end-use of the specific products;

(f) Requests, in this context, the Secretary-General to direct the Publications Board to develop criteria and review all publications and proposals for publications to ensure, inter alia, that each publication fulfils an identifiable mandate and need, is timely, does not duplicate other publications inside or outside the United Nations system, and is cost-effective, and that before the publication is printed, it satisfies the criteria on the basis of which it was authorized, and to report thereon to the Committee on Information;

(g) Continues its briefings, assistance and orientation programmes for broadcasters and journalists from developing countries focused on United Nations-related issues;

(h) Provides, on the basis of its activities, information to the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization about new forms of cooperation, at the regional and subregional levels, for the training of media professionals and for the improvement of the information and communication infrastructures of developing countries;

(i) Continues its policies of cooperation with all agencies of the United Nations system, and in particular with the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization;

(j) Continues its policies of cooperation with the news agencies in and of the developing countries, in particular the News Agencies Pool of Non-Aligned Countries;

3. Requests the Secretary-General, in the light of the increasing demands now placed on the Department of Public Information in relation to media coverage of United Nations activities, to provide at the fifteenth session of the Committee on Information an assessment regarding:

(a) Any measures considered appropriate to ensure that the working facilities provided for the media are fully adequate to meet present and future needs and, in this context, to consult with the Bureau of the Committee, spokespersons of the regional groups, the Group of 77 and China, in relation to the implementation of any significant measures in this regard;

(b) The consideration of a greater framework of coordination within the Department of Public Information in relation to the provision of facilities and services for the media, such as the work of the Executive Media Service and the provision of accreditation services;

4. Reaffirms the importance attached by Member States to the role of United Nations information centres in effectively and comprehensively disseminating information about United Nations activities and the optimization of the resources allocated to the Department of Public Information;

5. Calls upon the Secretary-General to submit a detailed and comprehensive report on his plan of integrating United Nations information centres with other United Nations offices, while maintaining the functional autonomy of the United Nations information centres and emphasizing that they should be fully operational, as provided for in relevant resolutions, to the Committee on Information at its fifteenth session for its consideration of the different options available in this regard. In this context, consultations should take place on this matter through the informal mechanism composed of the Bureau of the Committee on Information and the spokespersons of regional groups, the Group of 77 and China, as was established in paragraph 1 (s) of General Assembly resolution 46/73 of 11 December 1991;

6. Reaffirms the role of the General Assembly in relation to the opening of new United Nations information centres and invites the Secretary-General, as well, to make such recommendations as he may judge

necessary regarding the establishment and location of new United Nations information centres;

7. Calls upon the Secretary-General to study ways and means of redressing differences in the allocation of resources, in particular the differences of support, in relation to the financing of United Nations information centres in various countries and to report to the Committee on Information at its fifteenth session;

8. Notes the substantial contribution by the Government of Poland and requests the Secretary-General to finalize, in consultation with the Polish authorities, arrangements for a United Nations information component in Warsaw;

9. Calls upon the Secretary-General to implement fully its recommendations contained in resolution 46/73 B, including paragraphs 1 (l) and (m), regarding the establishment of a United Nations information centre in Sana'a, Yemen, as well as the reactivation of the United Nations information centre in Tehran and the enhancing of the information centres in Dar es Salaam, Dhaka and Bujumbura;

10. Encourages enhanced cooperation between the Department of Public Information and the University for Peace in Costa Rica as a focal point of promoting United Nations activities and disseminating United Nations information materials;

11. Takes note of the requests by Bulgaria, Gabon and Haiti for information components;

12. Calls upon the Secretary-General to enhance the efficiency of and ensure full programme delivery of all segments currently produced by all regional radio units in the Department of Public Information;

13. Encourages the Department of Public Information to take into account, especially in the area of electronic media production, the various standards and systems used around the world, bearing in mind the need for harmonization and efficiency;

14. Calls upon the Secretary-General, as of the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, to make every effort as a matter of particular urgency to create conditions and to make them more conducive to achieving parity by appropriate utilization of existing equipment in the press coverage of meetings in English and French;

15. Decides, as of the forty-seventh session of the General Assembly, on the publication in the Arabic and Spanish languages, after each annual session of the General Assembly, of the press release containing the resolutions and decisions adopted by the General Assembly and the results of the voting through reallocation of resources from the budget of the Department of Public Information;

16. Invites Member States to submit to the Secretary-General, by 1 January 1993, observations and suggestions on ways and means of furthering the development of communications infrastructures and capabilities in developing countries, with a view to consolidating recent experience in the

field of international cooperation aimed at enabling them to develop their own information and communication capacities, freely and independently, and further requests the Secretary-General to report thereon to the Committee on Information at its fifteenth session;

17. Decides on procedural grounds to refer to the Economic and Social Council for its consideration resolution 26 C/resolution 4.3 adopted by the General Conference of the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization at its twenty-sixth session and contained in the relevant note by the Secretary-General; 6/

18. Requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its fifteenth session in 1993 on the results of the implementation of a system-wide information programme for the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development;

19. Further requests the Secretary-General to report to the Committee on Information at its fifteenth session in 1993 and to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session in 1993, on the activities of the Department of Public Information and on the implementation of the recommendations contained in the present resolution, as well as in resolution 46/73;

20. Requests the Committee on Information to report to the General Assembly at its forty-eighth session;

21. Decides to include in the provisional agenda for its forty-eighth session the item entitled "Questions relating to information".

80. Also at its 9th meeting, the Committee decided, by consensus, to recommend to the General Assembly the adoption of the following draft decision:

Draft decision

Increase in the membership of the Committee on Information

The General Assembly decides to increase the membership of the Committee on Information from 79 to 81 members and decides to appoint the Republic of Korea and Senegal as members of the Committee on Information.

81. After the adoption, without a vote, of the draft report, as orally revised, closing statements were made by the Under-Secretary-General for Public Information and the Committee Chairman, as well as by the representatives of Pakistan (on behalf of the States members of the Group of 77), Spain (on behalf of the Group of Western European and other States), Poland (on behalf of the Group of Eastern European States) and China.

82. The Chairman announced that the next session of the Committee on Information was scheduled for 10 to 28 May 1993.

Notes

1/ Official Records of the General Assembly, Thirty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/35/21), annex, sect. V.

2/ Ibid., Thirty-sixth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/36/21); ibid., Thirty-seventh Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/37/21 and Corr.1); ibid., Thirty-eighth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/38/21 and Corr.1 and 2); ibid., Thirty-ninth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/39/21); ibid., Fortieth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/40/21); ibid., Forty-first Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/41/21); ibid., Forty-second Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/42/21); ibid., Forty-third Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/43/21); ibid., Forty-fourth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/44/21); ibid., Forty-fifth Session, Supplement No. 21 (A/45/21).

3/ A/AC.198/1992/2.

4/ A/AC.198/1992/4.

5/ A/AC.198/1992/3.

6/ See A/SPC/46/3.

7/ See United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization, Records of the General Conference, Twenty-first Session, vol. I, Resolutions, sect. III.4, resolution 4/21.

Annex I

STATEMENT BY THE UNDER-SECRETARY-GENERAL FOR PUBLIC INFORMATION AT THE OPENING MEETING OF THE COMMITTEE

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,

It is indeed a pleasure and privilege to welcome all of you on behalf of the Secretary-General to the fourteenth session of the Committee on Information. It is with great satisfaction that I also join you in welcoming the representative of Burkina Faso, this Committee's newest member.

As this is my first appearance before your Committee right after assuming my new functions earlier this month, please allow me to express my confidence that the Department of Public Information (DPI) will continue to benefit from your outstanding leadership and expertise, Mr. Chairman. The guidance and support of the members of the Bureau and the entire membership will be of particular significance as we enter perhaps the most challenging period of this Organization's history.

For our part, may I pledge to you DPI's full cooperation and commitment to offer any assistance you require to fulfil your vital mandate. I know that, working together, we can build a sound, focused and cohesive United Nations information strategy consistently geared to respond rapidly and effectively to evolving world events. Such a strategy will not only enhance public awareness of the full scope of this Organization's work but - I would venture to say - inspire a spirit of internationalism and active involvement on the part of the world community.

As we approach the turn of a new century and prepare to mark the fiftieth anniversary of this Organization, the world and the United Nations are poised on the threshold of a new era. Political, social and economic changes are sweeping the globe and the world literally has taken on a different face. New countries have emerged and the membership of this Organization has swelled to 175, as the peoples of the world increasingly exercise their right of self-determination and self-expression. The politics of confrontation are being replaced by a spirit of collaboration among nations and an awareness of the need, and even an eagerness, to pursue multilateral solutions to global problems have clearly emerged. The dynamics of this new climate of international relations have moved the United Nations to centre stage.

The breathtaking events of the recent past leave us searching for new grounding and fresh approaches to convey the message of a new United Nations in our continuing pursuit of a better standard of life in greater freedom for all. In these days, when change sometimes appears to be the only constant, much of humankind has begun to look upon the United Nations as the most potent catalyst in the prevention of conflict in the quest for peace as well as in the pursuit of international development and the eradication of human misery. To remain relevant, the United Nations must do more than keep abreast of the times. I daresay, this Organization has a crucial responsibility in forming that reality through its multitude of work programmes and activities and - of critical importance to this Committee and the Department - through its information programmes.

We are today presented with a rare opportunity to rise to the expectations of peoples of all nations and to quench their thirst for knowledge about what the United Nations does and how, in this decade, this Organization can influence the design and direction of global events both now and into the next century. Our task is not an easy one and high hopes and expectations are often mixed blessings; for, while we know that the rewards of our success could be enormous, we must also be mindful that the Organization's credibility may well be resting on the delicate balance of public opinion around the world.

I would submit to you today that the United Nations can be truly effective - and indeed live up to the vision of the founding nations expressed in its Charter - only with the full support not only of its member Governments but also of the "peoples of the United Nations". We must do our best to reach into every town and village, almost to every household, to earn the trust and support so central to the formation of public consent, the cornerstone of an effective United Nations. We must strive to instil the awareness that the United Nations is good value for the dollar; certainly a more cost-effective and humane solution to the conflict and human suffering which tragically could occur if nations did not have an open forum and a mechanism through which to handle their problems and mutual concerns.

This requires the closest possible cooperation with the media worldwide, with non-governmental organizations and with other redisseminators of information, for information is the sinew that binds public consent. So much good work is accomplished by this Organization; so many goals set by the world community are met; so many causes are advanced. It is our job to make sure that these achievements are brought to public awareness and that we do all within our power to nurture the renascent faith and interest in the United Nations so that the rising expectation for solving important future issues can translate into action.

Just as political, social and economic changes are sweeping the world, the winds of change are blowing across this Organization. In a dynamic and decisive manner, the Secretary-General has introduced administrative and structural changes to revitalize internal Secretariat operations, instil flexibility and direct the United Nations to fulfil its multifaceted and evolving role as the primary mechanism for conducting the world's business.

DPI, which has only recently undergone a major restructuring under the leadership of my distinguished predecessor, Madame Thérèse Paquet-Sévigny, will at present largely retain its current organizational form. Measures to enhance the role of DPI have, however, already been taken with the transfer to the Department of the responsibility for and the staffing resources of the secretariat of the interdepartmental Publications Board as well as a part of the News Distribution Service of the former Office for Research and the Collection of Information. Moreover, in a continuing effort to streamline operations and promote the cost-effective management of the limited resources at our disposal, DPI has been mandated by the Secretary-General to work with the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) on the integration of a number of United Nations information centres with UNDP field offices. In this connection, I wish to assure you that the information components affected will retain strong information programmes, and that the integration will be effected primarily in terms of achieving a more efficient use of available staffing and operational facilities and resources.

Another important development is that, having in mind the interest expressed by the respective Governments and as a practical means of ensuring an effective United Nations in a changing world, the Secretary-General has decided to establish United Nations Interim Offices in some Republics of the Commonwealth of Independent States along the same lines of the integrated approach towards development and information activities.

Against this tableau, we in DPI are aggressively evaluating and rethinking the way in which we plan and act - as well as react - to the rapid-fire developments and succession of events and activities of the Organization. We know that we must remain flexible - even fluid - in the deployment of our limited resources to match our actions to the priorities of our work programmes. We are mindful that we must engage in a dynamic interaction with the public, connecting with people of every walk of life - through the audio and visual media and press, through publications and informational brochures, and grass-roots interaction at all levels. We must capitalize on recent successes and strengthen our links with the media, serving as the "window to the world" for viewers, listeners and readers all over on the Organization's myriad of activities. In fact, work is already progressing in this regard and, on a typical day, one can hear on the radio, watch on television, or read in a newspaper at least one story on United Nations involvement in Africa, Asia and the Pacific, Europe, the Middle East and the Americas.

There is much to do and we shall turn to this expert body for both guidance and support as we introduce new methods and fresh ideas in our mission to shape a strong public interest and confidence in the role of this Organization as a catalyst in accelerating the positive developments which have already occurred; for example, through technical programmes for development in African and other developing countries as well as campaigns for the elimination of apartheid, advance alert systems for the prevention of conflict, the making and preservation of peace and security and the spread of democracy throughout the world. We shall seek to play a pivotal role in highlighting efforts to confront the dangers facing the modern world. To name just a few: North-South economic and social issues which grow ever more dramatic; the threats to our environment; the promotion of and respect for human rights; and the elimination of the suffering which confronts humanity in far too many parts of the world. We shall also focus attention on preparations to mark the Organization's fiftieth anniversary, seizing yet another opportunity to shine the spotlight on the history and achievements of this institution, founded on the visions and hopes of "we the peoples" following the darkest moment of modern civilization.

An important aspect of our strategy will be to target carefully our intended readerships, listeners and other audiences in order to improve the channels of communication. However universal our message may be, more than ever before we have to address more efficiently a diversity of audiences. This requires a more systematic evaluation of the Department's information material both with regard to cost-effectiveness and accessibility.

In exploiting the universal power of a stronger United Nations in trying to bring together all the peoples of the world, the Department must avail itself of new information technologies to communicate and convince in a manner which peoples can take to heart. Our interconnected and interdependent world

is a reality that the Department must take into account in adapting to the requirements of nations and people as they interact and exchange data and ideas. Modern technologies and the existing web of electronic networks have become essential to rally public opinion in pursuit of common goals. DPI shall seek every opportunity available - given its financial and other limitations - to use them. The summit level meeting of the Security Council is a prime example of how, working with and capitalizing on the interest of our counterparts in the news media, we can involve the public in the activities of this Organization and use modern information technology as an instrument to serve the cause of the United Nations.

Mr. Chairman,

Having shared with you my thoughts on the direction and forms that our public information programme can take, I should now like to take this opportunity to elaborate in some detail on the work of the Department of Public Information during the inter-sessional period.

As you well know, DPI activities can largely be characterized as directed in purpose and audience, while broad in approach and subject-matter treated, and multi-media in its form of dissemination. The target audience can be as expert and experienced as world-class journalists or as new to the Organization as elementary schoolchildren. Many of our efforts are expended precisely in targeting the audience or readership and tailoring our multi-media information products not only to reach them physically, but to reach them with materials that will have an impact on how they view the United Nations and the world around them. To enhance the value of our work to the public, we have - so to say - reinvested the data gained through readership surveys or public opinion polls into new projects as we develop them.

Our approach can therefore be characterized as both audience-directed and programme-driven. We begin with the identification of the target audiences - that is, how we have been able over the past years to define that somewhat elusive term "public" in the name of our Department - then concentrate on informing the "public" on specific programmes set for us by the General Assembly. We organize seminars and meetings for experts and non-governmental organizations, produce books, films, videos, television and radio programmes, ensure their effective distribution and, finally, evaluate their impact and usefulness as information products.

To begin with the definition of our "public", I would recall that we essentially service two types of audiences: firstly, the news media to whom we provide largely "raw materials" which they use in their own programming; and, secondly, defined readerships, listeners or viewers to whom we deliver directly finished information products.

Our work with the news media has for the past couple of years taken on a new dimension as the United Nations has become a "hot" news item, with television and radio news broadcasters anxious to gain access to United Nations events and news. Press releases and briefings have become a staple of life and the Department has established - and will continue to seek - an active interaction with the media and will pursue every opportunity to utilize their interest to promote an informed and positive image of the Organization.

Here I would also recall my earlier reference to the decision of the Secretary-General to incorporate the News Distribution Service within the Office of the Spokesperson/Executive Media Service. Thus strengthened, the Division now has the responsibility to monitor, on the basis of a wide spectrum of media sources, and provide the Secretary-General and senior officials with commentaries on the work of the Organization in the media across the globe.

Media perceptions, as discerned through a review of the editorial comments of opinion-makers, will be gathered by field information offices throughout the world for analysis and appropriate reaction. Through this system, we anticipate that the Organization will be better able to counter misperceptions and erroneous statements almost as quickly as they appear, thereby enhancing our ability to form positive public opinion.

As you are aware, the Organization has also devoted considerable attention to peacemaking and peace-keeping operations in the recent past. In this connection, I should observe that the Office of the Spokesperson has evolved into a veritable training ground for spokespersons assigned to peace-keeping operations, the latest example being the recent appointment of two senior DPI staff members as spokespersons for the United Nations Protection Force in Yugoslavia and the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia - led, by the way, by another of my distinguished precedessors, Mr. Yasushi Akashi.

The sharp increase in the number and broadened scope of peacemaking and peace-keeping activities over the past couple of years - since April 1991, six new operations have been launched - have made new and exacting demands on the Department. Worldwide public interest and the increasingly central role of information activities to fulfilling the mandate of the mission itself in the area of the operations have required that DPI not only train spokespersons to work in the field but also formulate and implement information programmes tailored to each endeavour.

The role of DPI in these political missions has become so important that I would like to take this opportunity to brief the Committee on how we develop these information components. In order to strengthen our effectiveness, the Department has initiated a set of guidelines on measures to meet the dual mandate of a comprehensive information programme for a peace-keeping or other politically sensitive endeavour. On the one hand, the Department elaborates a detailed explanation of the role of the United Nations in connection with the mission for a target audience including the media, government agencies, non-governmental organizations, research institutions and the public at large.

On the other hand, recognizing that the successful implementation of the Organization's mandate may well be facilitated by public information activities specifically designed for the mission location, DPI carries out specific local projects, such as educational campaigns on human rights, which are relative to the tasks at hand and serve to further related United Nations work. In consultation with the substantive office concerned, all these activities are proposed as comprehensive information campaigns for the specific mission concerned. Examples of recent projects include the information campaigns employed or in progress for the United Nations Observer Mission in El Salvador, the United Nations Transitional Authority in Cambodia,

and proposals designed in support of the United Nations Mission for the Referendum in Western Sahara, the United Nations Iraq-Kuwait Observation Mission, the United Nations Angola Verification Mission, the United Nations Protection Force in Yugoslavia and the United Nations Technical Mission to Somalia; in short, all the major political missions undertaken or planned within the past few months.

Although the immediacy of news broadcasts on fast-breaking developments has kept the United Nations at the forefront of public consciousness, DPI has continued to design information campaigns and create products to reach directly to target audiences. These outreach programmes have involved virtually all aspects of the Department's work; from publishing materials and creating posters, to conducting briefings and guided tours, to producing films, videos and radio programmes for broadcast in all parts of the world. Developed along the programmatic lines directed by the General Assembly through this Committee, these programmes treat not only the headline United Nations news items, they are also intended to keep the world thinking about the plethora of issues on the international agenda.

In compliance with the mandates of the General Assembly, public information campaigns have focused on such salient aspects of the Organization's programmes as the environment, social development and humanitarian affairs, the fight against apartheid, the rights of the Palestinian people and African development activities. With your permission, Sir, I should like briefly to describe some of the specific endeavours we have undertaken in these fields of interest.

As you are all aware, in Rio de Janeiro in June of this year, the United Nations will convene a Conference on Environment and Development: the Earth Summit. DPI has devoted considerable effort to cultivate and inform the media on the issues on the Conference agenda. I am pleased to note that the response has been phenomenal. Some 40 to 50 questions per day from the media are already being handled and links have been established with important international media. To name just a few: CNN, the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation, the BBC, Antenne 2, Channel 13 Chile, Time and Newsweek will produce stories or supplements featuring the event. As of 24 March, the Department has accredited 1,635 journalists for UNCED - well ahead of the Conference itself. The Department will make available to broadcasters its own series of radio features just prior to and during the Conference and it has already produced a number of television magazine programmes on a variety of Conference-related issues - including 12 entitled The UN in Action.

To convey to you the magnitude of the distribution network, I should tell you that the Department has disseminated more than 120,000 copies in English and tens of thousands in six other language versions of its brochure on UNCED. Additional thousands of copies of 11 backgrounders in the Earth Summit series have likewise been distributed. Naturally, these activities will intensify as the time of the Conference approaches, culminating with full coverage of the event from the Conference site. I would note that this Committee is scheduled to discuss further the comprehensive information programme developed for the Conference in the context of its consideration of the Secretary-General's report set out in document A/AC.198/1992/3.

In addition to UNCED, DPI has also been promoting other major United Nations events. The recently concluded eighth session of the United Nations Conference on Trade and Development received a good amount of press attention all over the world. The Department has accredited some 250 journalists, and provided coverage in English, French and Spanish. At present, plans are being formulated for public information programmes in support of the 1993 World Conference on Human Rights, the 1994 United Nations Conference on Population and Development and the 1995 Fourth World Conference on Women. In this connection, the Department recently published an illustrated book entitled Women: Challenges to the Year 2000, with a companion poster and brochure, outlining further action that must be taken to improve the daily lives of women throughout the world.

DPI has pursued the fulfilment of its mandate to further the understanding of various aspects of the question of Palestine and to promote the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination through the conduct of a successful journalists' tour to the area, a series of national media encounters and the International Encounter for European Journalists held at Helsinki in June 1991. Further national and regional journalist encounters are planned for this year, including the first of the series scheduled for May. Publishing activities include, among others, the planned issuance of such booklets as one summarizing the outcome of the Helsinki Encounter and an updated dition of a booklet on the work of the Special Committee to Invest e Israeli Practices Affecting the Human Rights of the Palestinian People ther Arabs of the Occupied Territories.

I should also like to reflect on another very important area of public information activities - our work in support of the fight against apartheid. Working closely with our colleagues in the Centre Against Apartheid, we have continued to create information products - such as the travelling exhibit on apartheid - which we believe are heightening public consciousness at this crucial time. The historic referendum in South Africa just over a week ago serves as a poignant reminder of the astounding changes in our world and the galvanizing impact of public opinion. Our efforts will be designed to keep this issue squarely in the public consciousness and, indeed, conscience.

Strengthened by the mandate conveyed in General Assembly resolution 46/151, the Department accords priority attention to building international awareness of Africa's severe economic crisis. Activities include the continued publication of the periodical Africa Recovery and Briefing Papers on issues of special concern to Africa, such as: environment and development; African priorities for action; regional integration; foreign direct investment; Africa's debt crisis; economic diversification; as well as food security and self-sufficiency. Resources permitting, an international media tour will be organized to two countries, to enable journalists to experience first-hand the difficult and far-reaching action African Governments are undertaking to revive their economies.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished delegates,

I have just reviewed the various aspects of DPI's collaboration with the major communications media and the way in which the Department is carrying out the various information activities entrusted to it by the General Assembly. The seminars, briefings, meetings, publications, films, video and radio

programmes are different ways of giving expression to this overall strategy. Aimed at specific target groups, these activities seek to speak for the United Nations and explain the objectives the Organization intends to pursue and the principles it intends to follow, so that our priority objectives better understood. We can indeed be satisfied at what we have achieved in this area thus far. Yet there is still room for improvement, particularly in using our limited resources more effectively.

A good example is the Yearbook of the United Nations, which is experiencing major delays in publication. I should like to recall in this connection that at its most recent session, the General Assembly had supported the Department's efforts to eliminate the backlog and to restore the Yearbook's normal schedule of annual publication.

In accordance with this Committee's guidelines, which were endorsed by the General Assembly, the Department concluded a number of agreements with an external publisher in order to speed up the publication of the 1988, 1989 and 1990 editions of the UN Yearbook as well as the current 1991 edition. I should also like to inform you that the 1987 edition was submitted on schedule in December 1991 and that it is currently in publication.

Other major efforts in this area concern the publication of an expanded version of the World Media Handbook, which is scheduled to appear in mid-1992. I am happy to inform you in this connection that the first edition of this publication, which appeared in 1990, was selected by the American Library Association for inclusion in its list of major documents, and that it is particularly valued for its full coverage of developing countries, about which, and I quote, "it is difficult to obtain media data". The Handbook, which seeks to promote better understanding of journalistic circles throughout the world, is also used as a reference tool by professionals both inside and outside the United Nations.

Audio-visual products are another important means of reaching the public at large. During the past year, the Department has continued to market and disseminate its audio-visual products around the world, often in collaboration with other United Nations agencies. DPI has also participated with certain specialized agencies in several international film festivals, video fairs and conferences. These events have provided an occasion for making new contacts with professional circles so that new co-productions can be undertaken.

I am pleased to inform you that several of our videos and films have won awards during the past year. The film "Break Down the Barriers" won first prize at the Superfest festival in June of last year. Our video production "Brushstrokes" was declared the best children's film at the Festival of the American Society of Independent Film Animators in January of last year, while "Our Planet Earth", another video production, won the Grand Prize at last year's Ekofilm Festival.

Mr. Chairman,

Mindful that the timeliness of information can well define its usefulness, the Department has been making every effort to ensure timely dissemination of its materials to end-users throughout the world. Over the past year, almost 1.5 million copies of publications and United Nations

parliamentary documents have been distributed, in addition to statements and messages by the Secretary-General, press releases, backgrounders and other materials.

The application of technological innovations represents a very important element of the departmental distribution strategy. DPI has been developing a computerized contact and mailing list programme for local use by the United Nations information centres in establishing and maintaining their own databases. In turn, these databases can be used to supply the Department with mailing list data for the central development of an up-to-date global directory of recipients interested in particular subjects. This integrated system is expected to enhance further the Department's ability to target and reach the audiences for each of its products.

Other noteworthy developments in our dissemination programme include the conclusion of a new contract with the Reuters news agency that provides, inter alia, for the direct distribution of United Nations press releases through Reuters' services. Moreover, in cooperation with the Global Education Motivators (GEMNET), DPI is working to expand the system of on-line public access to United Nations information services.

The importance of local access to United Nations information has been recognized since the earliest days in the life of this Organization. Over the years, a network of 67 information centres and services has been established throughout the world, enabling vital sectors of society to establish immediate contact with United Nations staff skilled in communications and versed in the Organization's activities. In many instances, the news and information products developed by the Department reach their intended audience precisely through the field information network. The centres, moreover, co-produce with networks both radio and television broadcasts and publish on their own newsletters and press releases in local languages.

The centres are instrumental in promoting United Nations observances such as United Nations Day, International Women's Day, Human Rights Day and the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. They contribute to the preparations for and the promotion of United Nations conferences, such as UNCED, and help stimulate national and regional support.

Regional meetings of centre personnel, special briefing programmes for local staff, computer training for some 100 staff of 35 centres and improvements in electronic communications and computerization have been undertaken to strengthen the effectiveness of the centres. During the current biennium, it is planned to complete the computerization of most of the information centres.

I would note at this juncture that the Committee on Information is scheduled to consider at its current session the report of the Secretary-General on the United Nations information centres, including details on the allocation of resources for each Centre as well as host government assistance, where provided. The document has been circulated under the symbol A/AC.198/1992/4. DPI will be happy to provide further information when the Committee considers this report.

Another element in our direct public information and dissemination campaign involves the important and constructive role played by non-governmental organizations (NGOs) in furthering the purposes and principles of the United Nations. The number of NGOs associated with DPI is at present 1,300; nearly double the number of just four years ago. The NGO Resource Centre, located on the ground floor of the Secretariat, serves the information and accreditation needs of hundreds of NGO representatives and conducts distribution of United Nations information materials to all DPI-associated NGOs throughout the world. The active interest of NGOs is strongly evident in their attendance at the DPI weekly NGO briefings - which attract an audience of between 160 and 400 participants - and their involvement in the 1991 DPI/NGO Conference held in September 1991, where some 1,200 representatives of 445 NGOs from 51 Member States were registered. The 1991 Conference, on the topic "Peace, justice and development: Ingredients for an Emerging World Order" was the largest NGO gathering ever organized by the Department and serves as a good indicator of just how relevant the work of the United Nations has become to all sectors of society.

Mr. Chairman,

I have described in some detail the work carried out in DPI over the past year. But, a very important element in implementing an effective public information or relations campaign must involve an evaluation of these activities.

In order to assess public opinion trends, the Department has continued polling the public about the Organization. From the results gathered, there is ample evidence that the United Nations is highly valued worldwide and that interest in all dimensions of the Organization's activities runs very high in all the countries surveyed.

In pursuance of the mandate of the Department, these studies serve a valuable managerial purpose and enable the Department to react and adjust its information strategies to reflect world developments and meet the public's expectations of the Organization. We intended to use these data to gain a vital perspective on the ways to secure the public consent I referred to in the opening of this statement to serve better the information programme directives and guidelines set by this Committee.

The effectiveness and timeliness of information products are very often functions of the provision of adequate resources and the sound management of these means. Essential elements in this equation are the necessity to reflect information activities in the basic framework of programmatic endeavours, to earmark sufficient resources for the Department of Public Information to carry out its work and to deploy these resources with flexibility to respond to changing conditions and priorities.

I might pause at this point, Mr. Chairman, to emphasize what we have all come to understand as the limitations of the biennial programme budgeting process when we are confronted with extraordinary and unpredictable demands for services. In this respect, DPI is no different from other departments involved in the planning and conduct of unforeseeable missions. With a full programme of mandated activities, as well as additional priority tasks that have been assigned to DPI which were not foreseen initially at the time of the

preparation of the 1992-1993 programme budget, DPI is already adjusting and adopting a flexible approach to the deployment of its limited resources.

But, elasticity can stretch just so far and I would be remiss in my duties if I did not signal to you today that the capacity for absorption is on the brink of exhaustion. As and when that point is reached, our ability to live up to all these expectations could be placed in jeopardy. If we are to continue to do a serious job, one that we can truly be proud of, and deliver all the information services and products requested by us, we shall - as in the past - turn to you, the Member States, for the support needed - both in concrete financial as well as in spiritual terms - to enable us to rise to your expectations and those of the world community.

In this regard, we have an extremely valuable resource in our cooperation with other agencies and programmes in the United Nations system. In anticipation of your discussion of the report of the Secretary-General on the activities of the Joint United Nations Information Committee (JUNIC), circulated as document A/AC.198/1992/2, I should highlight the more important joint activities undertaken in the past year.

In September 1991, DPI participated in the International Forum on Culture and Democracy held in Prague. The event was jointly organized by UNESCO and the Government of Czechoslovakia. On that occasion, the Department delivered a message on behalf of the Secretary-General and offered a presentation on the globalization of information and democracy.

In October 1991, DPI organized the second annual Inter-Agency Information Fair, which attracted 25 participating organizations. The two-week event provided a much-welcomed opportunity for the agency representatives to be in direct contact with the public, to disseminate their materials and to share their views and experiences.

And, this April, DPI will be coordinating the participation of seven United Nations agencies at the MIP Cannes Television Festival, the largest market in the world for video programmes.

Permit me, Mr. Chairman, to offer a few words about the cooperation between DPI and UNESCO. As explained in the last report of the Secretary-General to the General Assembly on "Questions relating to information", joint DPI/UNESCO activities aim at essentially two objectives: firstly, improving the information and communication infrastructure of developing countries; and, secondly, promoting freedom of the press as a vital element in development and democratization.

A vivid example of this cooperation was the 1991 seminar held in Windhoek, Namibia - in which UNDP also participated - to promote an independent and pluralistic African press. The recommendations adopted at this seminar, relating to the improvement of the information and communication infrastructure of the African countries, are now being implemented by UNESCO through its International Programme for the Development of Communication.

In the context of the activities of DPI over the past year, I have referred to the reports submitted to this session of the Committee on Information in compliance with General Assembly resolution 46/73 B of

11 December 1991. To summarize, the Committee will be considering three separate reports: document A/AC.198/1992/2 on the activities of the JUNIC; document A/AC.198/1992/3 before you on the implementation of a system-wide information programme for the 1992 United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED); and document A/AC.198/1992/4, providing the information requested in paragraph 1 (j) of the resolution on the allocation of resources to information centres, including host government assistance where such is provided. I take this opportunity to reiterate that the Department stands ready to provide you with any additional information you may require in your deliberations.

Mr. Chairman, distinguished representatives,

It goes without saying that, in today's increasingly interdependent world, communication is essential to the promotion of a better understanding among nations in the pursuit of multilateral collaboration for the benefit of all humankind. In a global environment characterized by a growing spirit of cooperation, the United Nations can - and should - play a pivotal role in bringing together the peoples of the world and fostering the advancement of universal human values. The ability of the United Nations to communicate its message of preserving peace, advocating social and economic development, and improving the quality of life for all has become more important than ever before. The challenges the Department faces in fulfilling its mission cannot be overemphasized nor should they be oversimplified.

In the discharge of its mandate, this Committee is in a unique position to play an essential role in guiding the Department of Public Information in the conduct of its work. Our success begins with you. For it will have its foundation in your understanding, support and guidance and will be built through the creative efforts and talents of the dedicated staff of DPI throughout the world. As you prepare to tackle the complex issues of your agenda, I wish you a fruitful session and again assure you of our steadfast commitment to do all within our power to assist you in your work and to attain the goals you set for us.

Annex II

STATEMENT BY THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMITTEE ON INFORMATION AT THE OPENING OF ITS FOURTEENTH SESSION

Let me take this opportunity to share a few preliminary ideas which, I feel, may facilitate our work during this session.

During the past two years, we have succeeded in working within a framework of consensus, and I believe that it is the intention of all members of the Committee that this process continue.

Nevertheless, I feel that this year we must introduce certain changes which, while pertaining to form, affect substantive matters and will allow us to take into account the changes and new dynamic in international relations and this Organization.

Distinguished delegates, we all agree on the basic principles which are contained in the mandate given to the Department of Public Information and, by extension, to the General Assembly. It is therefore my intention that our point of departure this year should not be, as it has been the case on previous occasions, the resolutions adopted in 1991. It seems more appropriate to me that, rather than add new elements and expand last year's list, we should endeavour to focus our efforts on a small core of issues which are directly related to the most important items and have to do with the overall management of the Department - topics to which we would hope that the Department of Public Information might devote special attention while continuing to carry out its original mandates.

I would therefore suggest that this year, instead of undertaking a paragraph-by-paragraph revision of recommendations adopted in 1991 and on which consensus exists, we should take a new, more concrete approach. Thus we would have an initial paragraph that would be limited to noting or reaffirming General Assembly resolution 46/73, leaving it to the Committee to find the most appropriate wording. We would then formulate a limited number of recommendations setting out our priorities. In this connection, it is important that we devote special attention this year to the informal seminars that are being held today, tomorrow - Tuesday - and Wednesday, since it is from these workshops that the priority areas will come.

Distinguished delegates, one issue to which special attention should be paid this year is the information centres. Here I would draw your attention to paragraph 14 of the report of the Secretary-General contained in document A/AC.198/1992/4, which states that the Secretary-General intends to identify "further means of integrating information components at a number of duty stations where UNDP maintains a strong representation with the purpose of minimizing operational costs while supporting and enhancing the information function". In so far as this new process is concerned, we are clearly in a transitional period, since the Secretary-General has not yet formalized his proposal and quite probably will not be in a position to do so during the current session. Bearing this in mind, I believe that the Committee should refrain this year from suggesting courses of action on this matter pending the appearance of the Secretary-General's report.

I should like, however, to emphasize the Committee's position on this subject, which is that, whatever solution is proposed, it is imperative that the centres' existing information function should not be reduced. To this end, I should like to refer once again to paragraph 14 of document A/AC.198/1992/4, in which the Secretary-General states that the purpose of the new process is "supporting and enhancing the information function".

Accordingly, any proposal put forward must take financial implications into account and fully uphold the mandate and function of the centres.

With regard to the Committee's methods of work, I suggest that this year the Bureau, together with the Chairman of the regional groups and China, should continue their work and, if necessary, a working group should be convened.

In mentioning the Bureau, I should like to express my gratitude to the three Vice-Chairmen and to the Rapporteur for the excellent work that they have done in my absence, and in particular to my friend Mr. Suhail, who conducted the informal meetings with the utmost efficiency.

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